

The Relationship between Self-regulation Skill and Additional Language Learning among Iranian Monolinguals and Bilinguals

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Abstract

The contribution of bilingualism to L3 learning has been a controversial issue, as stated in the existing body of the related literature. Accordingly, the main purpose of this study was to investigate the possible differences between mono-lingual and bilingual learners of English in terms of its syntax with regard to their self-regulation strategy. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, 411 female and male participants from eight senior high schools in Arak were selected among Persian speaking learners and Persian-Turkish bilingual learners based on stratified sampling method. A general English proficiency test, a self-regulation questionnaire and a syntactic structure test were administered to both groups to collect the required data. The results of one-way ANOVA, independent samples t-test revealed that monolingual and bilingual learners did not differ in learning syntactic structure. It was also indicated that there was a significant relationship between the subjects' self-regulation strategy and their general English proficiency. That is, the higher their levels of self-regulation strategy use, the higher their general English proficiency. According to the findings of the study, it is suggested that the high school teachers in Iran become familiar with self-regulation strategy and develop their teaching repertoire in terms of teaching techniques needed for developing self-regulation among their learners. In addition, in-service courses are required to help teachers learn and discuss the possible teaching techniques for developing EFL learners' self-regulation strategy in high school EFL classes where bilingual or a mix of bilingual and monolingual students are present.

Keywords: Bilingualism, Monolingualism, Syntactic knowledge, General English proficiency, Self-regulations

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1. Introduction

It is not simple to answer the question "Who is bilingual?" And "What is bilingualism? Although linguists have offered various definitions in this field, one of them cannot easily be considered a comprehensive and complete definition. Some researchers define bilingualism as a complex psychological, linguistic, and socio-cultural behavior that has a variety of dimensions (Blom et al., 2014). Others define bilingualism as the linguistic ability of bilinguals in two different languages, especially in the verbal dimension (Martin et al., 2016). Studies on bilingualism and its effect on new language learning have not provided a definitive answer to the question of whether there is a link between bilingualism and faster learning of a new language. Therefore, due to the contradictory results of different researches in this field, the present study has investigated the effect of bilingualism in learning a new language on male and female high school students in Arak.

The aim of the present study was to reduce the ambiguities about the effects of bilingualism on new language learning. Although half of Iranian people speak languages other than Persian, a few studies have been done on bilingualism and lots of questions have been unanswered. Therefore in this study the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Monolingual and bilingual students differ in the application of syntactic structures.

H2: There is a significant difference between students' self-regulatory learning skills and their language ability.

2. Literature Review

Bilingualism is a difficult concept to define, since many theories vary with respect to how much exposure a person needs to become native in a language. There is no general agreement among child language researchers about the 'normal' course of development among monolingual, nor among bilingual

children. It is not possible to define the concept of complete acquisition, since it is difficult to define a person's control over a language. Researchers have found the following about the opportunity or threat of bilingualism in learning a new language: Kohnert (2010), Faiazi Barchini (2011) Golestani et al. (2016) and Barek and Bialy Stock (2011) mentioned that bilinguals not only suffer from academic retardation when learning a new language, but also show greater social maladaptation than monolinguals. Contrary to this view, many researchers have found that bilinguals are more careful and sensitive to learning a new language (foreign language), which helps them to learn more than one language (Vahedi & Jangi, 2016). In other words, they believe that bilinguals, as they experience the process of learning another language and are better equipped with general language learning strategies, their metacognitive awareness is increased. Therefore, they show better performance in learning the next language (Cenoz & Jessner, 2000; Ceylan & Harputlu, 2015; Tajalli & Satari, 2013). Thus, the benefits of bilingualism can be studied in relation to other areas of classroom learning, such as self-regulation as one of the most well-known mental performance functions. In other words, it can be seen whether bilingualism leads to higher mental executive functions, for example, higher self-regulation.

3. Methodology

Based on consensus among researchers regarding, the larger the size of the sample, the greater its precision or reliability, the present researchers invited 411 pre-university students both male and female with the age range of 16 to 19 at 8 schools from different areas of Arak (one of the industrial cities of Iran) to participate in present study. The investigators had to exclude 11 participants from this study because they were not involved in this range of age. The researcher elicited some demographic information about the participants through a background questionnaire in order to match them as closely as possible for SES to minimize the effect of social class. Accordingly

the participants were classified as middle class. To achieve the objectives of the current study, some instruments as follows were used: a background questionnaire, general English proficiency test, the grammatical judgment test and a self-regulation questionnaire. In order to prevent any possible misunderstanding or confusion on the part of the participants and to ensure maximum understanding, the background questionnaire was developed in English along with its translation in Persian. After doing the sampling procedure and choosing subjects randomly 411 students were initially requested to participate in this study. Then testing was conducted in the respective schools by the investigators with the help of the school staff. The conditions for testing were strictly followed as far as possible.

4. Results

The results of independent t-test ($t(227) = .65, p = .51 > .05$) showed that there was no significant difference between bilingual and monolingual students in the syntactic structure. The mean scores of bilingual and monolingual students in preposition stranding and pied piping were 3.06 and 3.14, respectively. The results of independent t-test ($t(227) = .32, p = .79 > .05$) showed that bilingual and monolingual students performed the same. It was also shown that the mean score in self-regulation learning strategy of students with low language proficiency was 39.26, with medium language proficiency was 43.68 and with high language proficiency was 44.50. The results of one-way ANOVA indicated that students' self-regulated learning strategies are significantly different based on their language proficiency ($F(2,227) = 10.25, p = .00 < .05$). Thus, it can be concluded that the self-regulation learning strategies of students have increased with increasing language proficiency.

5. Conclusion

To carry out this study, an ex post facto design was employed. A total of 411

male and female subjects at eight schools in Arak, Iran were randomly selected from among two groups of Turkish – Persian bilinguals and Persian monolinguals. General English proficiency test, a back ground, a self-regulated learning strategy questionnaire and a syntactic structure test were administered to both groups. Statistical analyses including ANOVA, t-test and descriptive statistics revealed that there was no significant difference between bilingual and monolingual students in the syntactic structure. It was also indicated that students' self-regulated learning strategies are significantly different based on their language proficiency.

